

## Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, September 24, 1881, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Volta Laboratory, 1221 Conn. Ave., Washington, D. C. Sept. 24th, 1881. My sweet little wife:

What beautiful letters you do write! I feel somewhat as Elsie does when she has performed her daring gymnastic feat of walking up Papa to his shoulders-ending in a back summersault to the ground. Like her I exclaim "More — more" long before I get to the end.

Yes my darling I want more of your beautiful words and your beautiful thoughts. They do me good. They touch me to the heart. They arouse within me instinctive feelings that I had thought were long since dead. In regard to "Prayer" and a "Hereafter" — "almost thou persuedest me."

You are right. Knowledge is given to babies that is denied to wise men. Knowledge conceals as much as she reveals — Things that are dimly seen in the dark often cannot be perceived at all in the light — Though we cannot see the stars by day — they are no less in their proper places in the sky. I confess that the little knowledge I possess has blinded my eyes so that I cannot certainly see — all that I long for and hope may be true. I recognize the fact that your belief may be correct. While I cannot prove its truth, I cannot demonstrate its falsehood — and I would not for the world have my skepticism destroy your faith. You do me injustice to suppose that I smile at your ideas and only "pity your credulity."

I respect every honest belief and I can appreciate the beauty of a trustful faith like yours — if I cannot follow you as far as you go — and I can join you in the earnest hope that it may all be true.

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Why don't you talk to Elsie as you write to me? She is learning from servants many things that would be better taught her by her 2 own mother. She is imbibing ideas about death that can only excite a feeling of horror in her mind when she comes to think for herself. I wish you would talk to her about a good God and a hereafter and give her some pleasant thoughts of death. Throw a mouth over the grave and lift her eyes to something higher and more beautiful than corruption. Some person told her that her little brother had been “shut up in a box” — and “put in a hole in the ground” and from little remarks she has made to me from time to time — I feel convinced that it has made a great impression on the child's mind. I have heard her give utterance to other ideas that it pained me to hear from so young a child.

For my own part I would rather teach her what I believed to be a beautiful lie than a horrible truth. Death and corruption are awful subjects for any mind to dwell upon. She has obtained these ideas and it seems to me that we should, if only out of pity for the little mind, lead her to think of an immortal and incorruptible soul — and give her more pleasant ideas of death.

But there — I have finished and will now talk of other matters. Your cheque for \$5000 was received safely and has been forwarded to Uncle David for investment in the proposed mortgage. Is it not worth while having money to feel that while benefitting ourselves, we can also invest our money so that it may benefit others. The idea occurred today that perhaps we could do more to help Gertrude and Stanford Marsh than your father himself could do — and I suppose you must have been excited by the number of telegrams sent you in consequence. Your mother has discovered today that the mortgage upon the Washington House that Mr. Hubbard wanted to have paid off amounted to far more than he supposed and she hardly liked to take the responsibility of paying \$23,000 instead of \$15,000 — especially as Mr. Hubbard intended to expend a good deal in 3 helping Stanford Marsh. She asked me what to do. I found that instructions had already been given to have the mortgage cancelled — and if the order was countermanded it offered to

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me that your father's credit might be injured. It might appear as if he could not afford to pay off the larger sum. I told her that I would be glad if you could co-operate with your father in helping Gertrude and Stanford — and that if we were prepared to furnish whatever might be inconvenient for your father to do on their behalf — then the best thing to do would be to have the mortgage paid off — and that she need not worry herself about Stanford. I told her I was anxious to sell more telephone stock so as to invest the money in other things — and that we might as well invest it so as to be of assistance to our friends. In a proper business arrangement we could not lose, and they might gain.

Upon second thought it seemed to me that Gertrude was so near to you in so many ways that it was your duty to do something to help her so I sent my first confidential telegram.

There came Gertrude's letter to your mother — and I thought — “There, let them talk it over together — let them settle it all by themselves.” — Consequence — Telegram No. 2.

I want you to manage it all yourself — for Gertrude is your cousin not mine, although I feel as if I had almost a personal property in her too — and I am sure that I wish her — as much as you do — happiness and every blessing. So now see if you cannot manage this business all by yourself. I don't care what you do or how much money you expend — so long as you get the interest on your money paid to you regularly — in amount at least the average interest obtained from your other investments.

But mind that you put it as a sine qua non that the marriage is to take place immediately or sooner if possible! — and that all is to go as smoothly as a wedding bell.

Your loving husband, Alec.